



INSTITUTE BUILDING AND GROUNDS.

# The Blackstone School for Girls

**A Comparison.** 1894, number of boarding students, 29; 1906, number of boarding students, 303. 1894, officers and teachers, 5; 1906, officers and teachers, 21. 1894, value of grounds, building and equipment, \$20,000; 1906, value of grounds, building and equipment, \$90,000. This comparison would seem to justify the remark made by one of the leading Southern educators, that the growth of the Blackstone School had been one of the marvels of the educational development of the South. He asked to know how it happened that an institution founded by a few farmers and merchants, and located in a small country town of Southside Virginia, had grown continually, year after year, until at the close of the twelfth year it had a total enrollment of 386 pupils, which is probably larger than that of any other private school for girls in Virginia. The answer to his question is found in the AIM of the School, and the fidelity to this aim which has marked the work and the management of the school in every department. It will doubtless be of interest to those who make a study of educational movements, and also to those who have children of their own to educate, to hear something further concerning the phenomenal work at Blackstone.

## Why?

Fifteen years ago there were no schools for girls in Virginia owned and controlled by the Methodist Church. There were three or four institutions that were under the direction of members of the Methodist Church, but they were all private property, and the owners had absolute control and fixed the charges, the curriculum, and everything else as they thought best. The cost of attendance, as indicated in the catalogues, ranged from \$220 to \$250. Prices of farm products were at well-nigh the lowest ebb, and our farmers found it difficult to send their children to boarding schools at the prevailing prices. A few years before the State had established the Female Normal School at Farmville, and had fixed the charge for board and tuition without music, at \$160 per session. The result was that many parents who preferred to send their children to a Christian institution rather than to a State school had been forced by stress of circumstances to send them to the State institution. Without any feeling of hostility to the State school, but with a conscientious conviction that the church should furnish opportunities for the training of her own children at a moderate cost, a number of Christian gentlemen living in the town of Blackstone and the counties nearby applied to the Legislature for a charter, took up a subscription, and began the erection of a building. They met with obstacles of various kinds, and during the panic of 1893 there was much doubt as to their ability to bring the undertaking to a successful issue. In June, 1894, they elected Rev. James Cannon, Jr., Principal of the Institute, and it was decided to finish up a portion of the building at once and open that portion for the reception of students in September, 1894.

## The Blackstone Platform—Three Planks.

The first published literature set forth clearly the aim of the institution in such language that it could not be mistaken. Its aim was declared to be to give **THOROUGH INSTRUCTION UNDER POSITIVE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE COST.**

There are three planks in this platform, each one of which is essential to an understanding of the purpose of the Blackstone School.

### First Plank.

The first plank is **THOROUGH INSTRUCTION.** It abhors sham and pretense. It is not content with the idea that French, Literature, Music, and perhaps Painting and Elocution, are sufficient for our girls. It demands that our girls shall be given a sound course of instruction, as thorough as that given to our boys. Moreover, it insists that our girls shall be treated fairly. It does not call a high school course a college course, and give an A. B. degree for work which just fairly fits for entrance to genuine college work. The Blackstone School is a **TRAINING SCHOOL, AND NOT A COLLEGE**, and it so states in clear, explicit language. Its graduates are given as thorough instruction as is given in any school of like grade in this country, and when they finish the course they are not sent out into life with a false idea of their comparative attainments, but they know that there remaineth yet very much hard to be possessed. Dishonesty in trade is a great evil, but dishonesty in education is far more harmful, and our girls have suffered for this in the past far more than our boys.

### Second Plank.

The second plank in the Blackstone platform is the central plank—"**UNDER POSITIVE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES.**" Here, again, the AIM has been expressed in clear, explicit language. The underlying principle of the work of the Institute is that the body and the intellect have no reason for their being except as instruments of the soul. That system of education is held to be fatally defective which lays stress upon the culture of the body and mind and gives no place to the culture of the soul. It is not enough to teach a child to think; to teach it to think **RIGHT** is absolutely essential, if the knowledge and the power gained are to be truly helpful to the girl and to those with whom she lives. A distinctly Christian school is the only kind which gives to the soul its proper place. It is the highest ambition of the Blackstone School to so blend the training of the heart and mind as to develop a high type of cultivated Christian character. This work must be done, not only by precept and example, but as nearly as possible all the influences surrounding the life must be positively Christian. The atmosphere of the School is free from cant and sanctimoniousness, but Jesus Christ is recognized as Lord and Master of the whole life, and a failure in loyalty to Him is held to be the worst failure in the student life.

### Third Plank.

The third plank in the Blackstone platform is a financial plank—"**AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE COST.**" The School was established to put sound Christian training within reach of girls in moderate circumstances. The cost for board and tuition, without music, was put at \$150 per session when the School was established, twelve years ago. Notwithstanding the great increase in the cost of living, the price still remains at \$150 per session. And this price has been maintained, notwithstanding the fact that the price for board has been increased in nearly every school in the State, and notwithstanding the fact that the Institute can never accommodate all the applicants for admission, ninety-eight applicants having been rejected the last session for lack of room. Had the Board of Trustees increased the price 20 per cent, there would have been no difficulty in filling the rooms. But to have increased the price would have defeated the great purpose in the establishment of the School. It cannot be too clearly emphasized that the purpose has never been to make money, but to **PUT SOUND CHRISTIAN TRAINING WITHIN THE REACH OF GIRLS WHO COULD NOT ATTEND A HIGHER PRICED SCHOOL.**

### Self Help Encouraged.

The School has had over 1,200 different young ladies under its care. Of this number, over 250 have been trained and allowed to pay a part or all of their expenses by working after leaving school. For the past four years a system of Self-Help Scholarships has been adopted, by which a girl can pay one-half of her expenses by light work in the School. These 250 girls are rejoicing that she opened the way to a broader, more helpful life to these girls than they could ever have known had there been no Blackstone Institute.



GRADUATING CLASS 1906.

### The Present Problem.

The ever-present problem has been the question of meeting adequately the needs of the institution. Like a growing child, the Institute has called for more room and more clothes, and although the property value has increased from \$20,000 in 1894 to \$90,000 in 1906, the Institute is calling now for \$45,000 with which to carry on its work with greater efficiency than ever before. Mr. Andrew Carnegie, after careful investigation, decided that the character of the work of the Institute was such as to justify him in offering to give \$12,500 of the amount required; provided the friends of the institution would give the other \$32,500 in cash or realizable securities. This movement is being strongly pressed by the Principal, and at this writing nearly \$17,500 has been pledged by friends of the School, leaving a balance of \$15,000 yet to be raised. As soon as this amount is pledged ground will be broken for the erection of a building containing an Assembly Hall, a Library Hall, a Gymnasium, and a number of Bedrooms, with which to accommodate more satisfactorily the students of the Institute. A subscription card recently issued gives in condensed form an answer to the question: Why should you help us?

- Because:**
1. The Blackstone Institute is not private, but is church property.
  2. It puts sound Christian training within reach of girls in moderate circumstances.
  3. It has already had 1,200 young ladies under its care.
  4. 250 of these have been trained and allowed to pay their expenses after leaving school.
  5. It gives Self-Help Scholarships, by which a girl can pay one-half of her expenses by light work in the School.
  6. It trains for service. Pastors, parents and neighbors testify to the moral and spiritual influence of the girls trained at the Institute.
  7. We need your help.

The space limit prevents anything further in reference to this flourishing and very successful institution, but from what has been said some idea can be formed of the principles underlying the work of the School, and the reasons for its extraordinary success.



SCHOOL GROUP, 1905-'06.